



DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling

For Your Information...

Economic Benefits of Recycling

Recycling is good for the environment – and the economy.

While the environmental benefits of recycling are well known, what is less known is that recycling is an economic success story as well. By turning waste into valuable raw materials, recycling creates jobs, builds more competitive manufacturing industries and adds significantly to the U.S. economy.

Recycling is working.

The U.S. Recycling Economic Information (REI) Study, commissioned by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in partnership with numerous states, was conducted to determine the economic benefits of recycling to the national economy. The study was completed in 2001.

According to the study, the recycling and reuse industry nationwide has more than 56,000 establishments that employs 1.1 million people generating an annual payroll of \$37 billion and grossing \$236 billion in annual sales.

The REI Study also shows that another 1.4 million jobs are “indirectly” supported by the recycling and

reuse industry resulting in an annual payroll of about \$52 billion and about \$173 billion in annual receipts. Spending by employees of the recycling and reuse industry leads to another 1.5 million jobs with an annual payroll of \$41 billion and annual receipts of \$146 billion. In addition, the recycling and reuse industry generated about \$12.9 billion in federal, state and local taxes.

What is the recycling industry?

The recycling industry is a large and diverse network of public sector institutions (e.g., local governments, state agencies, colleges and universities) and private companies. Types of recycling organizations include steel mills, iron and steel foundries, paper manufacturers, computer and electronics demanufacturers, glass container manufacturers, rubber product manufacturers, pavement producers, plastics reclaimers and converters, private and government staffed collection centers, materials recovery facilities and recyclable materials wholesalers.

Within the industry, the economic impact of the recycling manufacturing sector far exceeds the recycling collection, processing and reuse sectors.

Recycling also is big business in South Carolina.

The recycling industry has a \$6.5 billion impact on the state's economy according to a study conducted by the College of Charleston's Department of Economics and Finance.

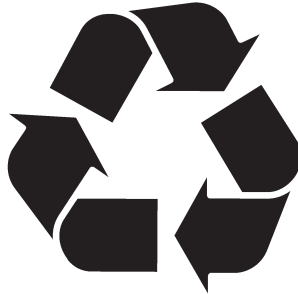
“The Economic Impact of the Recycling Industry in South Carolina” study, commissioned by the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, shows that the recycling industry is directly responsible for more than 15,000 jobs, \$1.5 billion in annual personal income and \$69 million in tax revenue each year. In addition, the study estimates that the state's recycling industry will grow about 12 percent annually during the next five years with an economic impact of more than \$11 billion.



Four major manufacturing industries account for more than half of the industry: paper mills, steel mills, plastics converters and iron and steel foundries.

Recycling and reuse are competitive with other industries.

Recyclables have value. Recycling allows materials that would become waste to be used as valuable resources. The recyclables that you place in your bin or take to a drop-off center end up on the market as valuable commodities that contribute significantly to the economy. The increasing supply of recyclables fuels manufacturing industries and makes them more competitive and sustainable.



Overall, the nation's recycling and reuse industry compares favorably to other key industries such as automobile manufacturing and mining according to the REI study. The industry far outpaces the waste management industry because recycling adds value to materials and contributes to a growing labor force.

In addition, a large number of jobs are supported by the reuse industry according to the REI study. These type of jobs range from the more traditional thrift shops and antique dealers to computer demanufacturers and pallet rebuilders. Overall, the reuse industry employs nearly 170,000 workers in more than 26,000 establishments nationwide with an annual payroll of about \$2.7 billion and about \$14.1 billion in annual revenues.



There are additional benefits for recycling.

Recycling helps businesses, other organizations and communities avoid disposal costs associated with landfills and incinerators. More and more local communities – large and small – are demonstrating that recycling and reuse programs can be cost-competitive with disposal options. This is particularly true if communities consider the “full cost” of solid waste disposal and account for the environmental and other negative impacts of waste generation.

Recycling also stimulates the development of green technology. Recycling allows for and encourages the development of more environmentally friendly products. The vast supply of low-cost materials from local collection programs has spurred many businesses to develop cutting-edge technologies and products. Waste tires, for example, are used in many applications including rubberized asphalt for paving roads. In fact, South Carolina is a national leader in developing this technology through the work of the Asphalt Rubber Technology Service housed at Clemson University and funded through a grant provided by the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

For more information about the economic benefits of recycling including the complete U.S. Recycling Economic Information Study, please visit www.epa.gov/jtr/econ/index.htm. For more information on the economic impact of recycling in South Carolina, please call DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling at **1-800-768-7348** or the S.C. Department of Commerce's Recycling Market Development Program at **(803) 737-0477**.



Office of Solid Waste
Reduction & Recycling
1-800-768-7348 • www.scdhec.gov/recycle

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